

reach across that aisle. I expect the President's proposal will include ideas supported by both Democrats and, in the past, Republicans. I hope my Republican colleagues will give his vision the consideration it deserves.

Tonight President Obama will also propose a balanced alternative to the devastating automatic spending cuts which take effect next month. Democrats believe we should prevent these harmful arbitrary cuts, cuts to both military and, initiatives to help middle-class families prosper. Remember, Republicans in the Senate and in the House voted for these harsh measures. We could easily avert these job-destroying cuts which would hinder the economic recovery by ending wasteful tax breaks for corporations and giveaways to companies that ship jobs overseas. A balanced approach to pare senseless spending reduction with a modest contribution from the wealthiest Americans would limit the damage of the so-called sequestration.

I was disappointed to learn yesterday the Republican leaders in the House have no intention of bringing legislation to the floor to replace the sequester with a more sensible approach. They are going to do nothing.

Senate Democrats will offer their own solution to the sequester later this week. If Republicans truly agree that these across-the-board cuts would be damaging to our economy and to national security, they should work to help us pass an alternative.

During his first State of the Union Address a long time ago, the first President of the United States, George Washington, told Congress this:

The welfare of our country is the great object to which our cares and efforts ought to be directed.

As Republicans and Democrats from both Chambers come together, I repeat, the welfare of our country is the great object to which our cares and efforts ought to be directed.

Democrats and Republicans should hear the message that George Washington gave a long time ago. It is important to listen to the State of the Union tonight, which we will, and we should all keep in mind the words of George Washington. Despite our differences, if there is the will to work together, the power to build an economy works for every American, and we will succeed.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 47, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 47) to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

Pending:

Coburn amendment No. 15, to more quickly resolve rape cases and reduce the deficit by consolidating unnecessary duplication within the Department of Justice.

Coburn amendment No. 16, to amend the requirements for speedy notice to victims and to require a report to Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time be equally divided between both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, tonight we will welcome the President to the Capitol to deliver his State of the Union Address.

As I mentioned yesterday, Republicans will be listening with great interest to see where the President plans to take the country over the coming year. Some media outlets are already reporting we will be subjected to another litany of leftwing proposals, with plenty of red meat for the President's base. I sure hope not. The campaign is over, and the fact is that if the President plans to accomplish anything good for the country in the coming months, he is going to have to go through a Republican-controlled House.

So this morning I would like to humbly suggest once again that it is time for the President to reach out to Congress, including Republicans, and make divided government work. That is how he will actually address the issues Americans are most concerned about right now, and it is the only way.

The first issue many of us will be listening for tonight is the President's plan for controlling spending and replacing the Obama sequester. The record is clear that the President and his aides came up with that sequester, and they got it. It is a little puzzling to see them now trying to pass it off like a hot potato.

Republicans have been very clear about the fact that we would rather enact smarter spending cuts. House Republicans even voted on the plan—not once but twice—to do just that. But Washington Democrats so far have failed to put forward a serious proposal of their own. They ignored the issue for more than 1 year before finally showing up to the debate last week with the usual gimmicks.

This is the President's chance to rally the American people around a real set of spending cuts and reforms. I will be interested to see what he plans to offer because what we have been hearing so far, frankly, isn't very encouraging. He needs to understand the American people will not accept attempts to replace deficit reduction both parties have already agreed to with tax hikes. We already agreed to reduce spending in the amount the sequester would reduce spending when we voted for the Budget Control Act back in August of 2011 and the President signed it.

What we expect the President will be offering are tax hikes we all know would be used to finance even more spending, when we promised the American people we would spend less. If the President does try to do that, then he shouldn't expect anyone else to go along, least of all the American people.

Many on both sides of the aisle support eliminating tax loopholes in the context of fundamental bipartisan tax simplification that lowers tax rates, and we hope to have a chance to do that in the months ahead. But it is bad policy to punish this industry or that one so Washington can fund 1 more week of government spending and cause more Americans to lose their jobs.

Remember, due to the operation of law, the President already got the tax increases he wanted back on January 1. Because the law expired, the President got the tax increases he wanted—not with any votes, but he got it by the operation of law. So we are done with that part of the equation. The tax issue is over.

If the President wants a balanced approach, now is the time to show his hand on the spending cuts and reforms he will accept. That is how compromise works. But when we hear the White House suggest the challenge of controlling spending is essentially complete or when we hear the House Democratic leader echo the President's claim that we don't have a spending problem, it is hard to know where to start after a ridiculous suggestion such as that.

Over the weekend I spent some time in Nelson County, KY, and I can assure everyone the folks I spoke with there strongly disagree with the President's assessment.

The truth is the President knows better than that himself. Deep down he knows spending is completely out of control. He knows the debt has already grown by \$6 trillion over his 4 years in office. He knows that without spending reform, the national debt will increase to double the size of our economy in just a few decades. He knows something must be done now to save Medicare and Social Security before they go broke. Tonight is a chance to show it, to be straight with the American people, and to reveal what he plans to do about all this.

The good news is that many of the things we need to do to control spending and many of the things we need to